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ABSTRACT

This manual, the ninth edition of a regularly published definition and classification work on mental retardation retains some aspects of the system set forth in the eighth (1983) edition, but departs from previous editions in the following ways: (1) it attempts to express the changing understanding of what mental retardation is; (2) it formulates what ought to be classified as well as how to describe the systems of supports that people with mental retardation require; (3) it views mental retardation as an expression of the interaction between the person with limited intellectual functioning and the environment; and (4) it extends the concept of adaptive behavior from a global description to specification of particular adaptive skill areas. Rather than requiring subclassification into four levels of a person's mental retardation (mild, moderate, severe, and profound), the system subclassifies the intensities and patterns of supports systems into four levels (intermittent, limited, extensive, and pervasive). Following presentation of the definition of "mental retardation," the theoretical basis of the definition is discussed. Four dimensions are then addressed in diagnosing, classifying, and determining the needed supports of a person with mental retardation: intellectual functioning and adaptive skills, psychological/emotional considerations, physical/health/etiology considerations, and environmental considerations. Applications of the classification system to education, adult services, social policy, and legal matters are also discussed. (Contains over 200 references.) (JDD)

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